

# THE NORTHWEST NETWORK OF BISEXUAL, TRANS, LESBIAN & GAY SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

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## **ASSESSMENT TOOL OVERVIEW**

Intimate partner abuse relies on a pattern of power, control and exploitation established by one person over another. To identify if a person is establishing such a pattern, it is important to go beyond a simple checklist of —abusive behaviors . Because we find that virtually any behavior can either be used by a person to **survive abuse** or be used by a person **to establish power over another**, we must look further than a cursory survey of who has done what to whom. When assessing who is establishing systematic power and control in a relationship, it is crucial to look at the context, intent and effect of a pattern of behaviors.

**CONTEXT**—What is/was happening in the relationship over time, as well as immediately before and after a specific behavior occurred? What meaning or history does a certain behavior have, given the context? What impact does the context have on the agency/self-determination of each person in the relationship?

**INTENT**— What are the real, imagined, perceived, expressed, or intuited reasons for the behavior? What is the goal of the behavior? Was the behavior used to establish control over someone else, or was it used to regain control over oneself?

**EFFECT**—Whose life is smaller as a result of the behavior? Who is being controlled, manipulated, coerced, exploited or hurt as a consequence of the behavior? For example, —When I lost it like that, she finally realized how much she’d been hurting me, and allowed me to move back in, vs., When I lost it like that, I felt so ashamed of how I’d acted that I gave up on the changes I’d been asking for.

***The behavior itself is not the point—determining if the behavior is part of a pattern of systematic power and control over a partner is.***

The Northwest Network Assessment Tool consists of **Instructions** and **Worksheets**. The instructions broaden the discussion of context, intent and effect into a wide range of behaviors. The instructions frame questions for critical thinking before beginning an assessment conversation, as well as list a few sample questions that can be used when talking to a person about their specific experience. The instructions contain helpful prompts but cannot replace training, dialogue with other advocates, and on-going critical thinking.

The worksheets lay out these and additional questions into a number of grids on specific themes. They are not listed in a specific order except to correlate with the instructions.

The worksheets are designed to prompt and assist—the real work comes in the active listening of the advocate. This tool requires a significant commitment of time and advocate support.

There is no simple formula to determine who is battering a partner or who is surviving abuse, and this tool does not pretend to offer one. It does offer, however, a framework and strategy for discerning patterns of power, control and exploitation in abusive relationships.

We recommend that advocates receive training about this tool and that agencies planfully incorporate its use into their processes before the tool is used in an organization. We recommend that advocates who utilize this tool participate in significant, on-going anti-oppression training and analysis building. ***For info about the tool &/or training on assessment, call: The NW Network (206) 568-7777 Thanks!***

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